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## New EPA rule says 218 U.S. chemical plants must reduce toxic emissions



The Denka Performance Elastomer Plant sits at sunset in Reserve, La., on Sept. 23, 2022.

Associated Press  
Page 2

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## New EPA rule says 218 U.S. chemical plants must reduce toxic emissions

From Front

By **MATTHEW DALY**  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — More than 200 chemical plants nationwide will be required to reduce toxic emissions that are likely to cause cancer under a new rule issued Tuesday by the Environmental Protection Agency. The rule advances President Joe Biden's commitment to environmental justice by delivering critical health protections for communities burdened by industrial pollution from ethylene oxide, chloroprene and other dangerous chemicals, officials said.

Areas that will benefit from the new rule include majority-Black neighborhoods outside New Orleans that EPA Administrator Michael Regan visited as part of his 2021 Journey to Justice tour. The rule will significantly reduce emissions of chloroprene and other harmful pollutants at the Denka Performance Elastomer facility in LaPlace, Louisiana, the largest source of chloroprene emissions in the country, Regan said.

"Every community in this country deserves to breathe clean air. That's why I took the Journey to Justice tour to communities like St. John the Baptist Parish, where residents have borne the brunt of toxic air for far too long," Regan said. "We promised to listen to folks that are suffering from pollution and act to protect them. Today we deliver on that promise with strong final standards to slash pollution, reduce cancer risk and ensure cleaner air for nearby communities." When combined with a rule issued last month cracking down on ethylene oxide emissions from commercial sterilizers used to clean medical equipment,



**Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan appears at the White House in Washington, Nov. 27, 2023.**

the new rule will reduce ethylene oxide and chloroprene emissions by nearly 80%, officials said.

The rule will apply to 218 facilities spread across the United States — more than half in Texas or Louisiana. Plants also are located in two dozen other states, including Ohio and other Midwest states, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York and throughout the South, the EPA said. The action updates several regulations on chemical plant emissions that have not been tightened in nearly two decades.

Democratic Rep. Troy Carter, whose Louisiana district includes the Denka plant, called the new rule "a monumental step" to safeguard public health and the environment.

"Communities deserve to be safe. I've said this all along," Carter told reporters at a briefing Monday. "It must begin with proper regulation. It must begin with listening to the people who are impacted in the neighborhoods, who undoubt-

edly have suffered the cost of being in close proximity of chemical plants — but not just chemical plants, chemical plants that don't follow the rules."

Carter said it was "critically important that measures like this are demonstrated to keep the confidence of the American people."

The American Chemistry Council, which represents chemical manufacturers, said it was reviewing the rule but criticized EPA's use of what it called "a deeply flawed" method to determine the toxicity of ethylene oxide.

"We also remain concerned with the recent onslaught of chemical regulations being put forth by this administration," the group said in a statement. Without a different approach, "the availability of critical chemistries will dwindle" in the U.S., harming the country's supply chain, the ACC said.

The new rule will slash more than 6,200 tons (5,624 metric tonnes) of toxic air pollutants annually and imple-

ment fence-line monitoring, the EPA said, addressing health risks in surrounding communities and promoting environmental justice in Louisiana and other states. The Justice Department sued Denka last year, saying it had been releasing unsafe concentrations of chloroprene near homes and schools. Federal regulators had determined in 2016 that chloroprene emissions from the Denka plant were contributing to the highest cancer risk of any place in the United States.

Denka, a Japanese company that bought the former DuPont rubber-making plant in 2015, said it "vehemently opposes" the EPA's latest action.

"EPA's rulemaking is yet another attempt to drive a policy agenda that is unsupported by the law or the science," Denka said in a statement, adding that the agency has alleged its facility "represents a danger to its community, despite the facility's compliance with its federal and state air

permitting requirements."

The Denka plant, which makes synthetic rubber, has been at the center of protests over pollution in majority-Black communities and EPA efforts to curb chloroprene emissions, particularly in the Mississippi River Chemical Corridor, an 85-mile (137-kilometer) industrial region known informally as Cancer Alley. Denka said it already has invested more than \$35 million to reduce chloroprene emissions.

The EPA, under pressure from local activists, agreed to open a civil rights investigation of the plant to determine if state officials were putting Black residents at increased cancer risk. The agency initially found evidence of discrimination, but in June it dropped its investigation without releasing any official findings and without any commitments from the state to change its practices.

Regan said the rule issued Tuesday was separate from the civil rights investigation. He called the rule "very ambitious," adding that officials took care to ensure "that we protect all of these communities, not just those in Cancer Alley, but communities in Texas and Puerto Rico and other areas that are threatened by these hazardous air toxic pollutants."

While it focuses on toxic emissions, "by its very nature, this rule is providing protection to environmental justice communities — Black and brown communities, low-income communities — that have suffered for far too long," Regan said.

Patrice Simms, vice president of the environmental law firm Earthjustice, called the rule "a victory in our pursuit for environmental justice." □

Associated Press

# **GOP's Marjorie Taylor Greene delivers fresh threats of ousting Speaker Johnson in scathing rebuke**

By **LISA MASCARO**  
AP Congressional Correspondent

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Hard-right Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene is escalating her criticism of House Speaker Mike Johnson, blistering his leadership in a lengthy letter to colleagues and renewing threats of a snap vote that could remove him from office.

As lawmakers returned to work Tuesday from a two-week spring recess, the fresh onslaught from the Georgia congresswoman dragged the still-new speaker back into the Republican chaos that has defined GOP House control and threatens to grind work to a halt. Johnson may very well be unable to execute the basics of his job. "Today, I sent a letter to my colleagues explaining exactly why I filed a motion to vacate against Speaker Johnson," Greene said on social media about the procedural tool that could force the quick vote.

Greene in stark terms warned Johnson not to reach across the aisle to Democrats for votes he would need to pass pending legislation that hard-right Republicans oppose, particularly aid to Ukraine. That aid package as well as other agenda items are in grave doubt.

"I will not tolerate this type of Republican 'leadership,'" wrote Greene, a top ally of presumptive presidential nominee Donald Trump, in the five-page letter first reported by The New York Times.

The standoff threatens to mire the House in another standstill, saddling the Republican majority with a do-nothing label after months of turmoil that has sent some seasoned lawmakers heading for the exits.

It comes during what is typically a springtime legislative push in Congress to notch a few priorities before lawmakers turn their attention toward the November election campaigns.

For Johnson, who took the helm just six months ago after the House ousted Kevin McCarthy from the speaker's



**Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., arrives for an interview in Laconia, N.H., Jan. 22, 2024.**  
Associated Press

post, it is political payback for his efforts to keep government running by compromising with Democrats on must-pass legislation to fund federal operations and prevent a shutdown. Partnership with Democrats is about the only way Johnson can pass any bills in the face of a thin majority and staunch resistance from his right flank. He can lose barely more than a single Republican from his ranks on most votes.

Greene, who filed the motion to vacate the speaker before lawmakers left for spring break in March, has stopped short of saying she would call it up for the vote and her next steps are uncertain.

Other Republicans, even some of the eight who voted to oust McCarthy, the California Republican who has since retired from Congress, have cooled on Greene's effort, trying to prevent another spectacle. McCarthy's ouster left the House essentially shuttered for almost a month last fall as Republicans argued over a new leader.

And Democrats led by Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York have signaled they may lend their votes to Johnson, a courtesy they did not extend to McCarthy, which could save the Louisiana Republican's job in a bipartisan effort to keep the House open and functioning.

But Greene, during a rousing town hall late Monday in her home district in Georgia and in the scathing letter delivered Tuesday as lawmakers returned to work, left clear the threat that hangs over Johnson if he seeks any partnership with Democrats. In the letter, she outlined the promises she said Johnson made to Republicans during the fight to become speaker, and listed ways she said he had broken them — for example, by passing the spending bills needed to fund the government with existing policies many Republicans oppose, or by failing to include legislation with Republican proposals for securing the U.S.-Mexico border. □

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# Arizona can enforce an 1864 law criminalizing nearly all abortions, court says

**JACQUES BILLEAUD**

**Associated Press**

**PHOENIX (AP)** — Arizona can soon enforce a long-dormant law criminalizing all abortions except when a mother's life is at stake, the state Supreme Court ruled Tuesday, opening the door to prosecuting doctors who perform the procedures. Under the decision, a long-dormant law that predates Arizona's statehood would take effect. It provides no exceptions for rape or incest, but allows abortions if a mother's life is in danger. Enforcement can take effect in 14 days.

The ruling suggests doctors can be prosecuted for performing the procedure, but the majority ruling doesn't explicitly say that. The 1864 law carries a sentence of two to five years in prison for doctors or anyone else who assists in an abortion.

Arizona's high court ruling reviewed a 2022 decision by the state Court of Appeals that said doctors couldn't be charged for performing the procedure in the first 15



Arizona Supreme Court Justices from left; William G. Montgomery, John R Lopez IV, Vice Chief Justice Ann A. Scott Timmer, Chief Justice Robert M. Brutinel, Clint Bolick and James Beene listen to oral arguments on April 20, 2021, in Phoenix.

**Associated Press**

weeks of pregnancy.

State Sen. Arizona Eva Burch, who dramatically announced on the Senate floor last month that her pregnancy wasn't viable and she was getting an abortion, criticized GOP

lawmakers who expressed support for the ban.

"We know that every single Republican in the Arizona House and Senate supported this territorial total ban on abortion they signed an amicus brief affirming that

very fact," said Burch. "This moment must not slow us down."

Burch noted that Arizonans will be able to vote this fall on a ballot measure allowing the right to abortion, adding that "the right for re-

productive rights is not over in Arizona."

Currently, 14 states are enforcing bans on abortion at all stages of pregnancy, with limited exceptions. Two states ban the procedure once cardiac activity can be detected, which is about six weeks into pregnancy and often before women realize they're pregnant. Nearly every ban has been challenged with a lawsuit. Courts have blocked enforcing some restrictions, including bans throughout pregnancy in Utah and Wyoming.

In Arizona, an older state Supreme Court decision had blocked enforcing the 1864 law shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court issued the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision guaranteeing a constitutional right to an abortion.

After the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in June 2022, state Attorney General Mark Brnovich, a Republican, persuaded a state judge in Tucson to lift the block on enforcing the 1864 law. □

## More than half of foreign-born people in US live in just 4 states and half are naturalized citizens



Women representing more than 20 countries take part in a Naturalization Ceremony, March 8, 2024, in San Antonio.

**Associated Press**

**By MIKE SCHNEIDER**

**Associated Press**

**ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)** — More than half of the foreign-born population in the United States lives in just four states: California, Texas, Florida and New York and their numbers grew

older and more educated over the past dozen years, according to a new report released Tuesday by the U.S. Census Bureau.

In 2022, the foreign-born population was estimated to be 46.2 million people, or almost 14% of the U.S. pop-

ulation, with most states seeing double-digit percentage increases in the last dozen years, according to the figures from the bureau's American Community Survey.

In California, New Jersey, New York and Florida, foreign-born individuals comprised more than 20% of each state's population. They constituted 1.8% of West Virginia's population, the smallest rate in the U.S. Half of the foreign-born residents in the U.S. were from Latin America, although their composition has shifted in the past dozen years, with those from Mexico dropping by about 1 million people and those from South America and Central America increasing by 2.1 million people.

The share of the foreign

population from Asia went from more than a quarter to under a third during that time, while the share of African-born went from 4% to 6%.

The report was released as immigration has become a top issue during the 2024 presidential race, with the Biden administration struggling to manage an unprecedented influx of migrants at the Southwest border. Immigration is shaping the elections in a way that could determine control of Congress as Democrats try to outflank Republicans and convince voters they can address problems at the U.S. border with Mexico.

The Census Bureau report didn't provide estimates on the number of people in the U.S. illegally.

However, the figures show that more than half of the foreign-born are naturalized citizens, with European-born and Asian-born people leading the way with naturalization rates at around two-thirds of their numbers. Around two-thirds of the foreign-born population came to the U.S. before 2010.

The foreign-born population has grown older in the past dozen years, a reflection of some members' longevity in the U.S., with the median age increasing five years to 46.7 years. They also became more educated from 2010 to 2022, with the rate of foreign-born people holding at least a high school degree going from more than two-thirds to three-quarters of the population. □

# Verdict saying Switzerland violated rights by failing on climate action could ripple across Europe

By **MOLLY QUELL** and  
**RAF CASERT**  
**Associated Press**  
**STRASBOURG, France (AP)**

— Europe's highest human rights court ruled Tuesday that countries must better protect their people from the consequences of climate change, siding with a group of older Swiss women against their government in a landmark ruling that could have implications across the continent.

The European Court of Human Rights rejected two other, similar cases on procedural grounds — a high-profile one brought by Portuguese young people and another by a French mayor that sought to force governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

But the Swiss case, nonetheless, sets a legal precedent in the Council of Europe's 46 member states against which future lawsuits will be judged.

"This is a turning point," said Corina Heri, an expert in climate change litigation at the University of Zurich.

Although activists have had success with lawsuits in domestic proceedings, this was the first time an international court ruled on cli-



Portugal's Catarina dos Santos Mota, center, attends the session at the European Court of Human Rights Tuesday, April 9, 2024 in Strasbourg, eastern France.

mate change and the first decision confirming that countries have an obligation to protect people from its effects, according to Heri. She said it would open the door to more legal challenges in the countries that are members of the Council of Europe, which includes the 27 EU nations as well as many others from Britain to Turkey.

The Swiss ruling softened

the blow for those who lost Tuesday.

"The most important thing is that the court has said in the Swiss women's case that governments must cut their emissions more to protect human rights," said 19-year-old Sofia Oliveira, one of the Portuguese plaintiffs. "Their win is a win for us, too, and a win for everyone!" The court which is unrelated to the European

Union ruled that Switzerland "had failed to comply with its duties" to combat climate change and meet emissions targets.

That, the court said, was a violation of the women's rights, noting that the European Convention on Human Rights guarantees people "effective protection by the state authorities from the serious adverse effects of climate change

on their lives, health, well-being and quality of life."

A group called Senior Women for Climate Protection, whose average age is 74, had argued that they were particularly affected because older women are most vulnerable to the extreme heat that is becoming more frequent.

"The court recognized our fundamental right to a healthy climate and to have our country do what it failed to do until now: that is to say taking ambitious measures to protect our health and protect the future of all," said Anne Mahrer, a member of the group.

Switzerland said it would study the decision to see what steps would be needed. "We have to, in good faith, implement and execute the judgment," Alain Chablais, who represented the country at last year's hearings, told The Associated Press.

Judge Siofra O'Leary, the court's president, stressed that it would be up to governments to decide how to approach climate change obligations and experts noted that was a limit of the ruling. □

Associated Press

## Simon Harris is installed as Ireland's new prime minister

By **JILL LAWLESS**  
**Associated Press**  
**LONDON (AP)** —

Lawmaker Simon Harris was elected Ireland's prime minister by a vote in parliament Tuesday, becoming at 37 the country's youngest-ever leader. Harris takes over as head of Ireland's three-party coalition government from Leo Varadkar, who announced his surprise resignation last month. Harris, who served as higher education minister in Varadkar's government, was the only candidate to replace him as head of the center-right Fine Gael party.

Lawmakers in the Dáil, the lower house of Ireland's

parliament, confirmed Harris as taoiseach, or prime minister, by a 88-69 vote.

He was formally appointed to the post by President Michael D. Higgins in a ceremony at the president's official residence in Dublin. Harris was first elected to parliament at 24 and has been nicknamed the "TikTok taoiseach" pronounced TEA-shock because of his fondness for communicating on social media. He faces challenges including a strained health service, soaring housing costs and an exodus of Fine Gael lawmakers, more than 10 of whom have said they will not run

for reelection. "I commit to doing everything that I can to honor the trust that you have placed in me today," Harris said. "As taoiseach I want to bring new ideas, a new energy and a new empathy to public life."

Varadkar was the previous youngest-ever premier when first elected at age 38, as well as Ireland's first openly gay prime minister. Varadkar, whose mother is Irish and father is Indian, was also Ireland's first biracial taoiseach. Varadkar, 45, has had two spells as taoiseach between 2017 and 2020 and again since December 2022 as part of a job-share with Micheál



The new Prime Minister of Ireland, Simon Harris gestures as he is applauded by fellow lawmakers outside Leinster House, in Dublin, Ireland, Tuesday, April 9, 2024.

Associated Press

Martin, the head of Fian-na Fáil. Varadkar officially stepped down on Monday when he handed in his letter of resignation to the president. Varadkar told the Dáil on Tuesday that his time in politics had been

the "most fulfilling and rewarding time" of his life. "But today is the beginning of a new era for my party, a new chapter in my life and a new phase for this coalition government," he said. □

## Turkey and Israel announce trade barriers on each other as relations deteriorate over Gaza

By **SUZAN FRASER**

**Associated Press**

**ANKARA, Turkey (AP)** — Turkey and Israel announced trade barriers on each other Tuesday as relations deteriorated further amid the war in Gaza.

Turkey, a staunch critic of Israel's military actions in the territory, announced that it was restricting exports of 54 types of products to Israel with immediate effect. They include aluminum, steel, construction products, jet fuel and chemical fertilizers. In response, Israel said it was preparing a ban on products from Turkey.

The announcements came a day after Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said Israel had barred Turkish military cargo planes from joining an operation to airdrop humanitarian aid to Gaza and vowed to respond with a series of measures against Israel until it declares a cease-fire and allows aid to flow in without interruptions. "There is no excuse for Israel to block



**A woman waves flags in support of Palestinians in Gaza during a protest in Istanbul, Turkey, Friday, April 5, 2024.**

our attempt to deliver aid by air to starving people of Gaza," Fidan said.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government, which suffered major setbacks in local elections last month, is faced with intense pressure at home to

halt trade with Israel. Critics accuse the government of engaging in double standards by leveling strong accusations against Israel while continuing lucrative commercial relations.

Erdogan, whose ruling party has roots in Turkey's

Islamic movement, has been an outspoken critic of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians since taking office in 2003.

The Turkish leader stepped up his criticism of Israel following its military offensive in Gaza, describing Israel's

actions as war crimes verging on "genocide" and asserting that the Hamas militant group, considered a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States and European Union, is fighting for the liberation of its lands and people.

In a post on X, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said Erdogan was "once again sacrificing the economic interests of the people of Turkey for his support of the Hamas murderers in Gaza." In the same post, he said he had contacted organizations in the U.S. and asked them to stop investing in Turkey and refrain from importing Turkish goods.

Hamish Kinnear, senior Middle East and North Africa analyst at Britain-based risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft, said domestic considerations were behind Turkey's decision to slap trade restrictions on Israel, saying Erdogan's ruling party was trying to "rally its base in the wake of defeat in local elections." □

**Associated Press**

## Medical care and supplies are scarce as gang violence chokes Haiti's capital



**People take cover from gunfire during clashes between police and gangs in the Champs de Mars area next to the National Palace in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Monday, April 8, 2024.**

**Associated Press**

By **DÁNICA COTO and EVENS SANON**

**Associated Press**

**PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)** — Fresh gunfire erupted Tuesday in downtown Port-au-Prince, forcing aid workers to halt urgently needed care for thousands of Haitians.

Weeks of gang violence have forced some 18 hospitals to stop working and caused a shortage of medical supplies as Haiti's biggest seaport and main international airport remain closed, warned aid workers with The Alliance for International Medical Action, a

Senegal-based humanitarian organization.

"The situation is really challenging and affects our movement on a daily basis," said Antoine Maillard, the organization's medical coordinator based in Port-au-Prince.

The gang violence has driven about 17,000 people in the capital from their homes. Many are crammed into abandoned schools and other buildings where they often share a single toilet.

Maillard said aid workers were able to reach one of the camps for displaced people on Tuesday, "but there were too many gunshots to provide support."

He said the health crisis is worsening. It is difficult to find basic medications including antibiotics and anti-diarrheals since gang violence has shuttered suppli-

ers. The limited medication available has doubled and even tripled in price.

That means Haitians like 65-year-old Denise Duval are unable to buy needed medication or see a doctor.

"My health right now is not good," she said, adding that she has high blood pressure and often feels dizzy. "From hearing gunfire all the time, my heart beats a lot."

Duval is taking care of three grandchildren whose mother migrated to the neighboring Dominican Republic in search of work. She sends money when she can, but Duval said it's not enough to buy medication and support the children at the same time.

"We're living day-by-day and hoping that something will change," she said as she sat outside her home

and washed dishes in a bucket.

Gunfire still echoes daily throughout Port-au-Prince, though the gang violence has somewhat subsided in certain areas since gunmen began attacking key government infrastructure on Feb. 29.

Key roads remain impassible, preventing Haitians like 52-year-old Nadine Prosper from reaching one of the few operating hospitals.

Prosper lost her lower left leg in Haiti's 2010 devastating earthquake, and she's unable to get the medication she needs.

"I'm still suffering," she said as she walked back to her house with a cane in one hand and groceries in the other. "When the pain comes, if I don't have painkillers, that's the hardest part." □



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## Ayo & Casibari: Aruba's famous rock formations

**(Oranjestad)—The Ayo and Casibari Rock Formations are known locally as one of the crucial sites to have in your "off-road" trip itinerary. These naturally formed rock formations as just one of the few places on the island that hold a rich history of our culture and of our ancestors.**

### Ayo

The Ayo Rock Formation is located in the northern part of the island, right on the road that leads you to the Black Stone Beach, and close to the Natural Bridge. The Ayo is a fenced terrain that consists of several giant boulders, resting neatly on top of or side by side each other, adding gorgeous natural architecture to the surrounding "mon-

di". This is also one of the few sites to contain prehistoric markings of our indigenous ancestors. The Ayo Rock formation contains stairs that lead you to the top of the highest boulder, offering a breath-taking view of the Aruban backyard. The



Ayo is usually quiet, as it is situated farther away from the busier parts of the island. However, this is just another charm of the site: the quiet area and the refreshing breeze offer a sense of comfort and peace.

### Casibari

Probably the busier rock formation site, the Casibari is situated more in the center of the island, much closer—and more accessible—to the general public. Just like Ayo, Casibari is a fenced area containing several boulders that lay on top or lean on each other. The best aspect of the Casibari Rock Formation is the accompanying view when you climb up the top of the round, flat bolder. For this position, you can see the majority of the is-

land and the ocean in the south. Right in front of the entrance, there is the Casibari Café and Grill, a great place to get refreshments and snack before continuing your off-road adventure!

Both sites are open free to the public, 24 hours a day. However, unless you are taking a trip with a professional tour guide, there are no guides at the sites to help you climb the rock. So, do be careful when trudging on the boulders, and make sure to befriend any roaming goats you see along the way! □

**\*Mondi: what we call our Aruban wilderness. We don't have forests, or deserts, but we do have mondi!**



# Luna Foundation and New Life for Paws received a grant from Last Chance Rescue and Care, Inc!

*Written by Mark W. Schmink*

Luna Foundation and New Life for Paws recently received a grant from the Last Chance Rescue and Care, Inc. located in New York in the United States. This is an organization that supports the efforts of rescue dog organizations all over the world. This grant award

represents the type of positive collaboration that exists between our countries, to reach the common goal of saving these vulnerable dogs that are in jeopardy and in need of food and health care to survive and lead a happy life.

Luna Foundation and New Life for Paws are local rescue organizations that dedicate all their time and efforts in saving the sick, injured, abused, helpless, and neglected street dogs of Aruba. They have a dedicated group of volunteers that go out into the community and capture stray dogs to be neutered and spayed to stop the breeding, and unwanted pregnancies that add to the problem on the island. This problem is a containable issue, as Aruba is an island and is only 20 miles long by 6 miles wide.

The rescue organizations in Aruba are plentiful and pool resources to address and resolve the issue. This is in the best interests of the Aruba Government, Citizens, Community and Tourists who visit the island and contribute to its economic growth and employment rate. The problem of street dogs arose from public and tourist outcry on the stray dogs that were seen all over the island and shocked and alarmed people to act. As the rescue organizations emerged the problems were being addressed and the government took notice. However, these organizations operate on a shoestring budget and subsist solely on donations and contributions made by average citizens, individuals, visitors and now with the help of potential grants from other countries.

island to protect these precious natural resources, such as incorporating leash laws and neglect and abuse laws, animal control units and shelters. More is needed to support these foundations in the form of budget allocations from the Aruban Government to bolster the resources of the rescues that will eventually catch up and get control of the problem. They also seek to educate the public through social media (there are hundreds of groups for Aruba Cunicus on the internet with tens of thousands of members) newspaper articles, fundraising efforts, and going into the schools to teach the next generation the importance of treating these dogs and animals with care, dignity, and respect to keep them safe, healthy and secure

The organizations do their best to address the issue daily and sacrifice their own money, health and well-being to reach their goals. They also participate in groups and committees to change the laws on the

Thank you to the Last Chance Rescue and Care, Inc. for their support and the support of so many others to assist and help on achieving the stated goals of all the rescue organizations on the beautiful island of Aruba. □

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## Sun catchers: The different lizards in Aruba

**ORANJESTAD – Colorful or camouflaged, you're bound to encounter a variety of lizards basking in the sun or scurrying on their way in our island. From the charming, friendly iguanas to the good-luck gecko Pega-Pega, you're bound to meet a few of these special residents during your visit.**

Aruba, as a desert island, is home to an incredible variety of unique and colorful species. Among them we can find different lizards, most of which have South American origins. But there are a few exceptions.

### Iguanas



Iguanas are easy to spot, as they are larger than most other lizards and when young, have a bright green color that makes them stand out.

The iguanas usually found in Aruba are the Iguana iguana, known as the green iguana, or locally as Yuwana. The Yuwana are a mostly herbivorous species, and can grow up to 2 meters in size, including the tail, making them one of the largest in the iguana family. As you will see, despite their name, as they reach adulthood, the iguanas can take on a grey or blue tone instead of the bright green displayed by the young ones. In Aruba – as in the rest of the Kingdom of the Netherlands – the most usual color varies from green to lavender, black and sometimes a reddish brown.

Yuwana is a protected species, as it is listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), meaning

that international trade is regulated through the CITES permit system. In the past, Arubans used to eat a popular Yuwana soup, as it was believed to give strength and help restore health – probably due to the protein boost it delivered. However, it is now illegal to catch, kill, buy or sell Yuwanas in Aruba, and this includes eating them!

### Turnip-tailed gecko



The turnip-tailed gecko is known locally as the Pega-Pega, meaning sticky-sticky, due to the way it sticks to walls using the suction in its little fingers. They are found inside houses, and are mostly a nocturnal animal.

According to Etnia Nativa, the local Pega Pega is immediately recognizable by its large size, with a body length of up to 12 cm, and its large, swollen tail, approximately the same length or slightly shorter than its body; females are larger and more robust than males. It has short, robust legs with flattened toes and extensive basal webbing.

The undersides of its toes are covered in lamellae, which are used as friction pads to cling to smooth vertical surfaces. Some can even walk around completely upside down. Its toes are covered with ridges, which are peppered with millions of microscopic bristle-like structures called setae that attach and detach when the animal wills them to, and they never get gunked up.

They are variable in coloration, from a mottled dark gray to orange-brown, and are capable of changing color depending on their mood and surroundings. Mottled and banded markings aid in camouflage against tree bark. They are harmless and fragile; you can hold one in your hands as

long as you are VERY gentle.

Never put pressure on its tail because it will surely drop as a measure to try to distract the predator, and they are different from other lizards because they're long-lived, talkative, lack eyelids, and their small scales are situated next to each other like cobblestones rather than overlapping as is the case in most other lizards.

Turnip-tailed Geckos are insectivorous and feed on cockroaches, grasshoppers, beetles, flies, mosquitoes, and spiders, which makes them the best pest control to have at home! They spend their days concealed in dark tree grooves and cavities, in narrow crevices in the walls, or behind paintings, which provide the perfect shelter for them. Pega pega is a gecko endemic to our island, but in time, some 4–5 intrusive gecko species have been observed, some of which do not cease to amaze us with the racket they make, especially during the hours of the night.

The Pega-pega Phyllodactylus Julieni is also a protected species in Aruba, by law. It is illegal to kill them!

### Blue Kododo



These are one of the most striking lizards in Aruba, recognizable by the male's bright blue color. The Aruban whiptail lizard, Cnemidophorus arubensis, is a species endemic to Aruba, meaning you can only find it here on our One Happy Island! They are also recognized as the most common and populous lizard on the island. While the male is blue with white dots, the female is brown with blue dots.

These charming lizards eat mostly

plants, such as flowers, nectar, leaves and fruits, and occasionally enjoy some insects. They are selective in which plants they eat, because of the toxins present in many available plants species. The Kododo help take care of Aruba's vegetation by playing a significant role in the dispersal of seeds for certain plants: when they eat fruit, they excrete the seeds in diverse locations, contributing to the reproduction cycle of our local plants.

### Striped anole



The striped anole (Anolis lineatus) that lives in Aruba is known locally as Waltaka or Toteki. This is a species of lizard in the family Dactyloidae, and they are native to Aruba and Curaçao. It is usually found in dry areas, commonly where there are not large trees; rather they enjoy rocks, walls or tree trunks, as they prefer to stay close to the ground.

These lizards are about 7cm in length, have a brown color with a stripe on each side and typically, several stripes on the body and tail that are lighter in color. It has a dewlap which is orange-yellow – and what's unique about this species is that it is the only known species of anole where the dewlap is asymmetrically colored, with one side being a deeper orange and the other side a lighter yellow. Mostly this is seen in the males, as it is almost imperceptible in the females. If the Toteki shows you his dewlap, retreat! This is not a friendly greeting!

Lizards are wonderful creatures that are precious to our fragile, local ecosystem. Please be mindful of these residents as you enjoy your stay. □

**Images: Some images are from Aruba Birdlife Conservation.**



Article by Etnia Nativa

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## Sea grape, craftsman wine

**Each week, Island Insight shares with you a story of Aruba through the eyes of Etnia Nativa, where we welcome our guests to an island experience far beyond their usual expectations. The native ethnicity engages you with the mystical aspects of the island, its original culture and its traditional colonial heritage.**

During this episode, we will share valuable information regarding a plant known locally as "Druif di Lama", which translates in English as Sea grape. Classified as (*Coccoloba uvifera*), a tree that used to be highly valued for its fruits since ancient times by our native Arubans as well as our traditional shipbuilders who appreciated its resistant wood.

The sea grape is a plant belonging to the Polygonaceae family. Although the native belief is that the plant attracts termites, However if you take good care of it, not necessarily it infected with them. Found on the coastal beaches all around the Caribbean islands and from Brazil to Florida, including beaches of Peru. While it is widely cultivated in the Philippines, growing wild in Hawaii.

Before the coastal area of Aruba were plagued by construction, it was common to see large quantities of Sea Grape trees, while currently reduced to a few

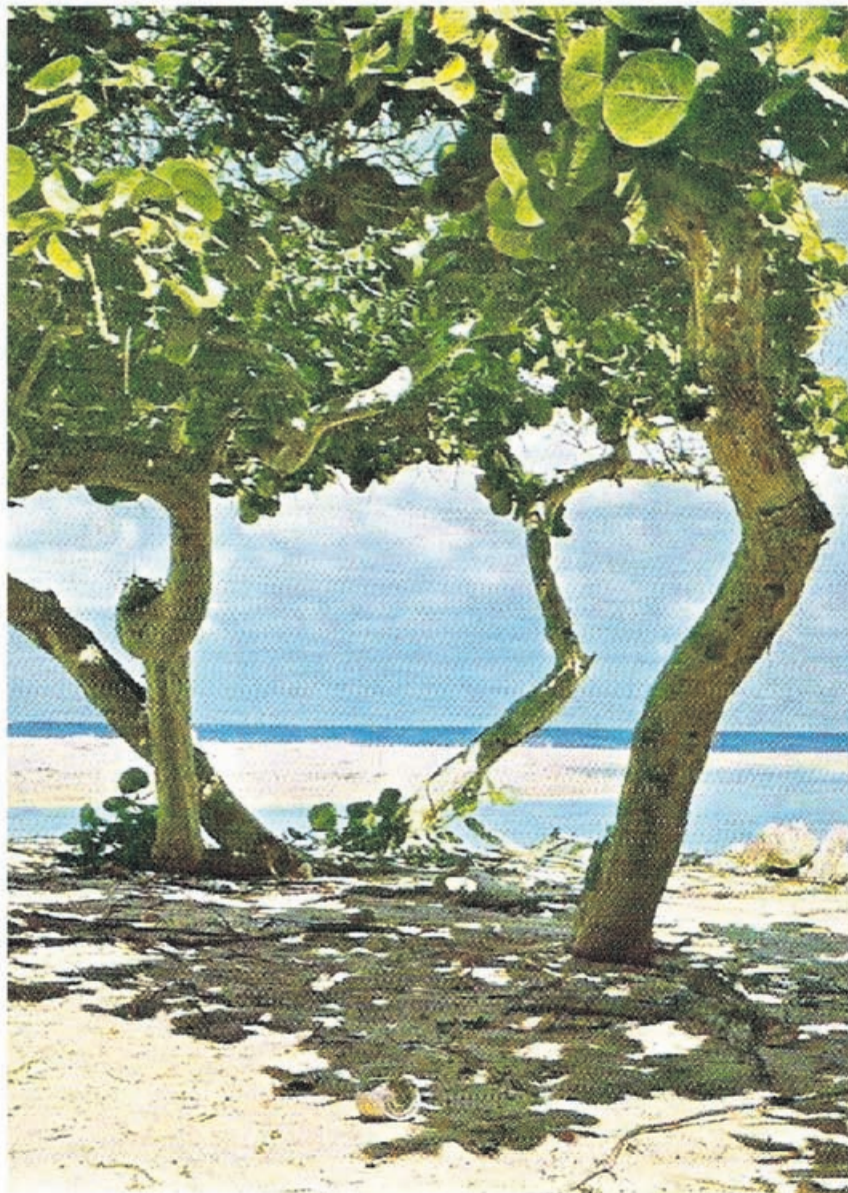
beache's and bocas in National Park areas. In some places the Sea Greape are kept short to form hedge between roads. An interesting experiment and a way of planting and caring for woody plants that grow together, and hlds the soil. "Druif di lama" is a prefect tree type for many Aruban gardens. For its great wind resistance and good growth along the coast. Gives great shadow and delicious fruits The periodic salty wind partially burns the thick leaves but it doesn't kill the tree.

Sea grape grows quickly with irrigation. It has few problems with diseases or pests. Sometimes insects appear on young leaves, causing them to become deformed and partially dry. However as a tree, it produces edible "white" or "red" fruits, which contains a fruit covered seed. It is an evergreen tree and drought resister over long periods. It can reach heights up to 15 m. It is a deeply branched and dioecious, with a short trunk, wide crown, and often horizontal branches. The alter-

nately arranged leaves are light green with often red veins, firm, leathery, hard, rounded, wide, heart-shaped, short-stemmed, and up to about 25 cm wide. Before falling, the leaf turns yellow to red. The small, creamy-white flowers have no separate petals or sepals, them grows in numbers of twenty to fifty in terminal clusters up to 30 cm long.

The fruits, are up to 2 cm in size, are round or pear-shaped and ripe violet-red or light green and them do not ripen at the same time within a cluster and must therefore be picked separately. Under the thin, opaque skin is a layer of juicy, glassy, reddish, purple, or sometimes greenish-white pulp, up to 3 mm thick. The pulp has a sweet and sour taste. The pulp encloses a whitish, hard, woody, egg-shaped seed, up to 1.5 cm in size. The fruits can be consumed as hand fruit or in compote, jam, jelly, and juice. Certain places in the Caribbean make fruit wine from their grapes. For the production of wine, as the pulp of each grape is very limited since it has a large seed, the grapes are lightly boiled and then squeezed in a very artisanal process, adding water, sugar, and yeast, and letting it rest for 24 hours in a warm place. After a few days of fermentation, it will be necessary to check the sugar content in order to bottle it and let it age for no less than two months.

On Aruba, the Sea grape's wood, being an extremely resistant material, was used for the artisanal construction of the keel of boats, which is the flat and elongated structure located at the bottom of the boat's hull and is commonly defined as the boat's vertebral column as it is essential for its stability and control.



If knowing more about Aruba is on your itinerary, Etnia Nativa is your only choice—a unique native gem! Let Anthony, our acclaimed cultural columnist, guide and lecture you regarding the most interesting and revealing stories regarding Aruba's uncovering knowledge acquired through generations of native ethnic presence, an beyond beaches learning adventure. Visit his magnificent dwelling that integrates reused materials with nature, bursting with culture and island heritage! Whats App +297 592 2702 etnianaativa03@gmail.com

# National Park Arikok: Aruba's biggest nature conservation



**The National Park Arikok comprises almost 18 % of the island. Its rugged terrain, desert-like hills filled with tall cacti, breathtaking coastline and protected local flora and fauna welcome you to be explored. There are numerous animals to discover, for example the sea turtle who lays his eggs on the park's beaches.**

The national park Arikok takes you on a memorable journey of the islands past offering unique geological, cultural and historical sites. These can all be enjoyed and explored either on your own or during guided tours. A wide variety of educational and informative programs and fun activities is available.

Did you know that four of the in total seven species of sea turtle lay their eggs on Aruba's beaches? In the national park, a Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) keeps a strict eye on a very special event taking place below on the beach: a majestic Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) heads back to sea after laying her eggs, while another nest laid 2 months ago by the same female hatches—a very rare occurrence of daytime nesting and hatching. Sea turtles prefer nesting in the cool and dark hours of the night. And hatchlings usually wait for the cue of cooling surface sand before emerging.

## Nature Conservation

The protected area of National Park Arikok was of-

ficially established in 2000. Arikok National Park is a 34 square kilometers (7907 acres) of natural area, located at the north-eastern part of Aruba which contains examples of most of the island's flora and fauna against a backdrop of great geological complexity. We are proud to state that approximately 18% of the total land area of Aruba is assigned as a National Park, to protect and preserve the flora, fauna, geology and historical remains present within Arikok National Park.

## The Landscape

There is a great geological variety within the park. The main aspects are the rough hills of the volcanic Aruba lava formation, the mysterious rocks of the batholithic quartz-diorite/tonalite, and the limestone rocks from fossilized coral. The two tallest hills on the island are situated within the park. Jamanota hill 188 meters (617 ft) and Arikok hill 176 meters (577 ft), from which the name of the park is derived.

The line of the permanently wind-and-wave beaten North Coast is broken by several bays (boca's). Most of them are small yet impressive inlets at the mouth of dry riverbeds. Some of these bays (boca's) are spectacular sights, adorned with white, sandy beaches and sand dunes, as is the case at Boca Prins and Dos Playa.

Arikok is also home to Conchi, Aruba's most important natural attraction; also

known as The Natural Pool. The journey to the Pool is and adventure by itself and only possible by foot, horse, ATV or 4x4 vehicle.

## Cultural and Historical components

There are a number of sites within the park that attest to the history of Aruba. The Caquetío Indians left rock paintings in Cunucu Arikok and Fontein Cave. The bird drawing in the park logo is a copy of one of these historical artistic expressions.

Old plantation (Cunucus) sites tell the story of an active yet challenging agricultural past.

These Cunucus were also residential areas for the few families that worked the land. These families found



ways to survive in the difficult conditions, and were able to erect their homes with materials found in the area. Two of these adobe houses have been restored. Park rangers are learning many of the old building techniques in order to preserve this unique Aruban mud-house. At Cunucu Arikok and near Plantation Prins you can find these adobe houses.

## Park Management

For the management of the park, a dedicated foundation "Fundacion Parke Nacional Arikok" (FPNA), known today as the Aruba National Park Foundation was established in July 2003. In February 2017, mangrove and wetland RAMSAR site #198 Spanish Lagoon was annexed to Arikok National Park due to its importance as a feeding and breeding

area for water birds and as a nursery area for a variety of marine organisms. With this addition, the areas under FPNA management increased by 70 hectares while the amount of species of flora and fauna to be conserved to over 250. On December 21st, 2018 (AB 2018 no. 77) Parke Marino Aruba – currently consisting of four marine protected areas (MPAs) – was officially established and subsequently brought under management of FPNA. In 2019 management plans will be established for the new MPAs which include: coral reefs, sea grass beds, mangrove systems, a large diversity of breeding seabirds. Parke Marino Aruba also contains potential shark nursery areas, endangered sea turtle nesting beaches and marine mammal nursery areas. □



**CROSSWORD**

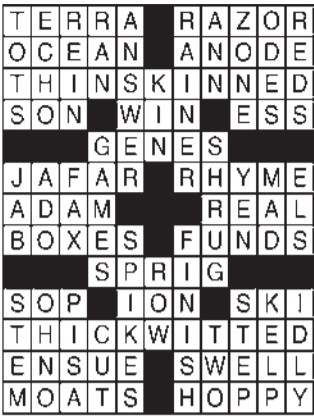
By THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS**

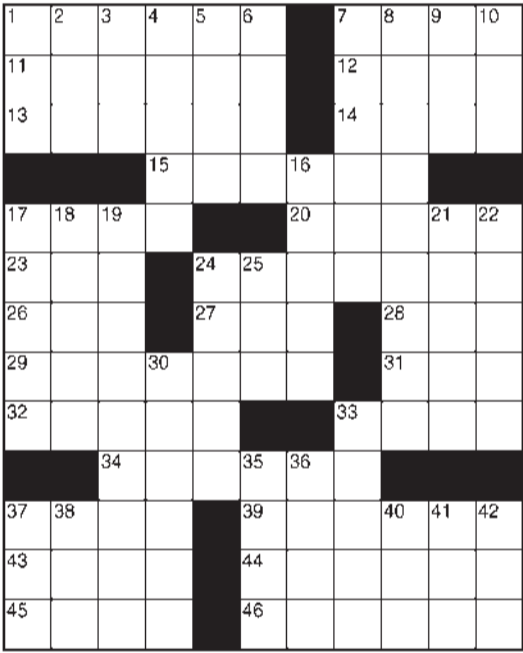
- 1 Showy flowers  
7 Dull pain  
11 Slow reptile  
12 Cornfield pest  
13 Bagel choice  
14 Carry  
15 Vast  
17 Really bad, in slang  
20 Declares  
23 Fire remnant  
24 Earned in quantity  
26 Airport screening org.  
27 Bullring cry  
28 Wedding words  
29 Places of worship  
31 Zodiac cat  
32 Girder metal  
33 Transmitted  
34 Blew one's top  
37 Stair  
39 Docking site  
43 Spot for laps  
44 Spiny reptile

**DOWN**

- 45 Writer Rice  
46 Procrastinator's words  
1 "— a deal!"  
2 Regret  
3 Auditor's org.  
4 Pancake order  
5 Sailors' saint  
6 Spots  
7 On the go  
8 Predatory reptile  
9 Spicy  
10 She sheep  
16 Produces  
17 Bulb units  
18 Useful skill  
19 Colorful reptile  
21 Make broader  
22 Nose, slangily  
24 Bakery buys  
25 Pub pint  
30 Folks  
33 Walk with pride  
35 Like dimes  
36 "Othello" villain  
37 Hotel amenity  
38 Cargo unit  
40 Cove  
41 Low digit  
42 Informer



Yesterday's answer



4-10

AXYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

4-10

**CRYPTOQUOTE**

OP'CP NKKXL OGPMGPC OP  
JYQFP KC QKM, LK OP AVEGM  
YL OPXX JYQFP. — HYIQPLP  
ICKSPCZ

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: OUR SPRING HAS COME AT LAST WITH THE SOFT LAUGHTER OF APRIL SUNS AND SHADOW OF APRIL SHOWERS. — BYRON CALDWELL SMITH

**Cruise ship Schedule: Apr 8 - Apr 14 2024**

TUE	09	SYMPHONY OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	I	1
WED	10	CARNIVAL MAGIC	07.00	15.00	B	1
		NORWEGIAN PRIMA	10.00	20.00	C	1
		MARELLA VOYAGER	08.00	20.00	I	1
THU	11	MSC DIVINA	07.00	14.00	B	1
		RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	08.00	18.00	C	1
FRI	12	CARNIVAL PRIDE	09.00	22.00	C	1
		NORWEGIAN SKY	10.00	20.00	I	1
SAT	13	NORWEGIAN JADE	07.00	20.00	C	1
TUE	16	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	22.00	C	1
WED	17	ODYSSEY OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	C	1
SAT	20	NORWEGIAN PRIMA	10.00	19.00	C	1

**Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba**

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic—but important—information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

**Supermarket hours**  
Supermarket hours may



vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

**Electrical power**



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

**Drinking water**



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

**Safety**



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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# Movie Review: In Alex Garland's potent 'Civil War,' journalists are America's last hope

By **LINDSEY BAHR**  
AP Film Writer

The United States is crumbling in Alex Garland's sharp new film "Civil War," a bellowing and haunting big screen experience. The country has been at war with itself for years by the time we're invited in, through the gaze of a few journalists documenting the chaos on the front lines and chasing an impossible interview with the president.

Garland, the writer-director of films like "Annihilation" and "Ex Machina," as well as the series "Devs," always seems to have an eye on the ugliest sides of humanity and our capacity for self-destruction. His themes are profound and his exploration of them sincere in films that are imbued with strange and haunting images that rattle around in your subconscious for far too long. Whatever you think of "Men," his most divisive film to date, it's unlikely anyone will forget Rory Kinnear giving birth to himself.

In "Civil War," starring Kirsten Dunst as a veteran war photographer named Lee, Garland is challenging his audience once again by not making the film about what everyone thinks it will, or should, be about. Yes, it's a politically divided



This image released by A24 shows Wagner Moura, left, and Kirsten Dunst in a scene from "Civil War."

Associated Press

country. Yes, the President (Nick Offerman) is a blustery, rising despot who has given himself a third term, taken to attacking his citizens and shut himself off from the press. Yes, there is one terrifying character played by Jesse Plemons who has some pretty hard lines about who is and isn't a real American.

But that trailer that had everyone talking is not the story. Garland is not so dull or narratively conservative to make the film about red and blue ideologies. All we really know is that the so-called Western Forces of Texas and California have

seceded from the country and are closing in to overthrow the government. We don't know what they want or why, or what the other side wants or why and you start to realize that many of the characters don't seem to really know, or care, either. This choice might be frustrating to some audiences, but it's also the only one that makes sense in a film focused on the kinds of journalists who put themselves in harm's way to tell the story of violent conflicts and unrest. As Lee explains to Cailee Spaeny's Jessie, a young, aspiring photographer who has elbowed

her way onto their dangerous journey to Washington, questions are not for her to ask: She takes truthful, impartial pictures so that everyone else can.

"Civil War" a film that is more about war reporters than anything else the trauma of the beat, the vital importance of bearing witness and the moral and ethical dilemmas of impartiality. Dunst's Lee is having a bit of an existential crisis, having shot so many horrors and feeling as though she hasn't made any difference violence and death are still everywhere. She's also a pro: Hardened and

committed to the story and the image. Her colleague Joel (Wagner Moura) is more of an adrenaline junkie, chasing the gunfire and drinking himself into a stupor every night. There's Jessie (Spaeny), the wide-eyed but ambitious newbie who is in over her head, and the aging editor Sammy (the great Stephen McKinley Henderson), wise and buttoned up in Brooks Brothers and suspenders, who can't imagine a life outside of news even as his body is failing him. All are self-motivated and none of them have a life outside of the job, which might be a criticism for some movie characters but not here (trigger warning for any journo audiences out there). The group must drive an indirect route to get from New York to Washington as safely as possible, through Pittsburgh and West Virginia.

The roads and towns are set-dressed a little bit, but anyone who knows the area will recognize familiar sights of dead malls, creaky off-brand gas stations on two lane roads, boarded up shops and overgrown parking lots that all work to provide an unsettlingly effective backdrop for the bleak world of "Civil War." □

## Beyoncé becomes first Black woman to hit No. 1 on Billboard country albums chart



Beyoncé walks onstage to accept the Innovator Award during the iHeartRadio Music Awards, Monday, April 1, 2024, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

By **MARIA SHERMAN**  
AP Music Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Beyoncé has made history once again. Her latest album, the epic "Act II: Cowboy Carter", hit No. 1 on the Billboard country albums chart, making her the first Black woman to top the chart since its 1964 inception.

The album also topped the all-genres Billboard 200, marking her eighth No. 1 album. According to Luminate, the industry data and analytics company, "Cowboy Carter" totaled 407,000 equivalent album units, a combination of pure album sales and on-demand streams, earned in the U.S. in its first week.

As a Black woman reclaiming country music, Beyoncé stands in opposition to stereotypical associations of the genre with whiteness. Conversation surrounding Beyoncé's country music explorations began when she arrived at the 2024 Grammy Awards in full cowboy regalia making a statement without saying a word. Then, during the Super Bowl, she dropped two hybrid country songs: "Texas Hold 'Em" and "16 Carriages," eventually leading to the release of "Cowboy Carter."

In February, "Texas Hold 'Em" reached No. 1 on the country airplay chart, making her the first Black woman to top that chart as well. □

# John Calipari departs Kentucky after 15 years, saying the program 'needs to hear another voice'

By **GARY B. GRAVES**

AP Sports Writer

**LEXINGTON, Ky. (AP)** — John Calipari is stepping down as Kentucky's men's basketball coach after 15 years, saying Tuesday that the "program probably needs to hear another voice" amid reports that he's closing in on a deal with Arkansas to take over that Southeastern Conference program.

Calipari posted a video on X, formerly known as Twitter, in which he said that after talking with his wife, Ellen, he decided a change was needed. He added, "We've loved it here, but we think it's time for us to step away and step away completely from the program."

Calipari leaves a Wildcats program he guided to the 2012 NCAA championship among four Final Four appearances. He went 410-123 in 15 seasons. The past few seasons have been disappointing by Kentucky standards, with a 1-3 mark in its last three NCAA Tournament trips, including first-round losses to No. 14 seed Oakland last month and No. 15 seed Saint Peter's two years ago,



University of Kentucky head coach John Calipari meets with reporters before attending his NCAA college men's basketball team practice at PPG Paints Arena in Pittsburgh, Wednesday, March 20, 2024.

despite being a top-three seed both times.

The most recent loss set off immediate calls to fire Calipari before athletic director Mitch Barnhart stated that Calipari would return next season. Firing Calipari would've triggered a buyout of more than \$33 million under the terms of

a 10-year, so-called lifetime contract signed in 2019.

Barnhart said Kentucky would work diligently to hire "a proven, highly dedicated coach who embraces the importance of this program to our fans and the state of Kentucky."

The AD added: "We're ap-

preciative of John Calipari leading our program for the last 15 years, adding to the legacy of championship success at Kentucky. We're grateful to John for his many contributions to the University, and our state, both on and off the court."

Calipari didn't specifically

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mention the Arkansas opening he has been linked to since multiple reports surfaced Sunday night about negotiations with the school. The Hall of Famer simply said, "There have been opportunities that have been presented to us, so we're discussing them as a family."

However, Calipari's announcement certainly clears the way for him to go the SEC rival with which he got very familiar while coaching the Wildcats.

The 65-year-old would replace Eric Musselman, who left over the weekend after four seasons to become coach at Southern California. There was no immediate word on whether Arkansas was close to hiring Calipari. A school spokesman told The Associated Press that the Board of Trustees was not scheduled to meet on Tuesday.

Calipari established a legacy in Lexington upon arriving in 2009 with an impressive parade of stellar freshmen who came to be known as "one and done" for playing one season before entering the NBA draft. □

## Clark Effect: Ratings and attendance boost could be on way for WNBA

By **DOUG FEINBERG**

AP Basketball Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — The basketball world can't get enough of Caitlin Clark and now that the college season is over, next up is the WNBA draft. While there is no drama about whether the Iowa guard will be the top pick, there is excitement about her arrival.

With record ratings for the NCAA championship game and nearly every other game she played this season, Clark is joining the WNBA at the right time. The league has its TV deal expiring at the end of next year and that could lead to a massive new contract for the WNBA.

The WNBA just had its most-watched season in 21 years, averaging 462,000 viewers per game across ABC, ESPN and CBS. The league

also had its most-watched Finals in 20 years that featured Las Vegas and New York. It was up 36% from the previous season. The league's attendance rose 16% it's highest figure since

2018. Throw Clark into the mix and that number could grow exponentially.

"When you're given an opportunity, women's sports just kind of thrives," Clark said. "I think that's been

the coolest thing for me on this journey. We started our season playing in front of 55,000 people in Kinnick Stadium, and now we're ending it playing in front of probably 15 million people or more on TV. It just continues to get better and better and better. That's never going to stop."

Clark has inspired countless young boys and girls to want to watch and attend college basketball games. The WNBA hopes that carries on to her career in Indiana, where she is the expected No. 1 pick in the draft Monday night. There's no reason to think it won't as fans traveled across the country to see her play in college as nearly every road game Iowa played was sold out the past two seasons. Two WNBA teams have already moved their

games against Indiana to bigger arenas.

"I know her shoulders are heavy because of what she has to give to women's basketball. I just want to say we're thankful. We're thankful that she chose to play basketball," South Carolina coach Dawn Staley said. "We're thankful for the way she's handled all of it. Her next step is the WNBA. I do think she can be that person that elevates us."

She certainly will be an attendance boost for the Fever, who were second-to-last in home attendance averaging just over 4,000 fans. The Fever play in Gainbridge Fieldhouse, which could hold 20,000 spectators. The team has not released how many tickets they've sold since they won the draft lottery to get the No. 1 pick. □



Iowa guard Caitlin Clark (22) shoots over South Carolina forward Sania Feagin (20) during the second half of the Final Four college basketball championship game in the women's NCAA Tournament, Sunday, April 7, 2024, in Cleveland.

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## Who's really left-handed? In baseball, it can be hard to tell

By **KRISTIE RIEKEN**

**AP Sports Writer**

**HOUSTON (AP)** — Houston's

Yordan Alvarez might be the top left-handed hitter in Major League Baseball. Teammate Framber Valdez ranks among the best left-handed pitchers, too.

Other than that, those guys are all right.

Literally neither player considers himself left-handed at all. MLB and its history are dotted with men who played out of their natural handedness, a phenomenon that is seen occasionally in other sports but is a regular occurrence on the diamond. Thumb through a pack of baseball cards from just about any era and you're likely to see players who bat one way and throw the other. Ask them to sign that card and there's no telling which hand would hold the pen. Valdez writes, eats and even hits (before the introduction of the universal designated hitter) with his right hand. His left arm has helped him make two All-Star teams and throw a no-hitter. What else does he use it for?

"Nothing, nothing, nothing," he said with a laugh.

Valdez simply decided at a young age that he wanted to be a left-handed pitcher. "I used to throw lefty every single day, like day by day by day," he said in Spanish through a translator. "When I was 11, I felt very comfortable throwing lefty, even though I did everything else righty."

Lefties accounted for around 26% of innings pitched in the majors last year, even though only 10-12% of the general population is estimated to be left-handed. Demand for good lefty pitchers is high, and Valdez recalls having an affinity for all of them.

"When I was growing up,



**Houston Astros starting pitcher Framber Valdez delivers against the Toronto Blue Jays during the first inning of a baseball game Tuesday, April 2, 2024, in Houston.**

I was always told that it is very important to have a lefty pitcher, that all the best pitchers were lefties as well," he said. "So, I told myself: 'Hey, I want to be a lefty.'" Alvarez throws, writes and eats with his right hand that sweet, powerful swing is his only left-handed activity. Like many young players, he aspired to be a switch-hitter. Oddly, he ended up more comfortable on his non-dominant side.

"But I just got accustomed to hitting left-handed," he said via translator. "And it was very interesting because my dad is the same thing. He hits left-handed, but he does everything else right-handed."

Players like Alvarez are common across the majors, with 95 position players currently on active rosters listed as batting left and throwing right, including superstar two-way player Shohei Ohtani.

Houston has the only two position players in the league who throw left and bat right in outfielders Chas

McCormick and Jake Meyers.

"My dad throws left and hits right so that's what I do, too," Meyers said. "I picked up a baseball with my left hand and started throwing it and picked up a bat and wanted to swing right-handed and that's kind of what he believed and now I'm here. Chas McCormick is the only other guy I've played with that does that." Toronto outfielder George Springer, a righty hitter and thrower, startled teammate Justin Turner this spring by writing with his left hand. "It's really weird," Turner said. "I saw him sign an autograph the other day and I was like, 'What the hell are you doing?'"

Springer, the 2017 World Series MVP, calls himself left-handed and says the only things he does righty are play baseball and golf. His parents tell him he started grabbing the ball with his right hand at a young age and stuck with it.

"That's just who I am," Springer said. "I've never re-

ally thought anything of it. I guess it is cool that I can do things with each side of my body and I'm not so one-way dominant."

Dr. Stephen D. Christman, a professor in the psychology department at the University of Toledo and an expert in handedness, said cases like Springer's aren't that surprising.

"It's easier for a lefty to learn to use their right hand than for a righty to learn to use their left hand because most left-handers lean more towards being ambidextrous," said Christman, who has studied handedness for more than two decades. Christman said studies have found only 1-2% of people are uniformly left-handed across the 10 activities used to measure handedness, including writing, drawing, throwing, brushing teeth and hair, opening a box and using a spoon. Because lefties are forced to adapt like when only righty scissors are available they're more likely to learn to use both hands. Though it's

rare in other sports for guys to play out of their natural handedness, there is a huge exception in the NBA. Superstar LeBron James is like Springer in that he's naturally left-handed but plays right-handed. James, who turns 40 in December, joked about his handedness late last year.

"I'm gonna play until I'm 40. Then, after 40, I'm gonna go all left-hand until I'm 45," he joked to reporters. "I'm gonna score 5,000 points with my left hand. Then I'll be done."

Valdez, Alvarez and Springer follow in a line of great MLB players who played out of their natural handedness. The list even includes Babe Ruth, who batted and threw left-handed but can be seen in photos using his right hand to sign autographs. John Thorn, MLB's official historian, says Ruth was naturally left-handed, but teachers at the time routinely discouraged children from writing with their left hand because lefties were "thought to represent the dark side."

Though not for the same reasons, Houston first baseman Jon Singleton ended up doing the same thing as Ruth. He both bats and throws left-handed but writes with his right hand.

"My mom's a school teacher, and she taught me how to write with my right hand when I was young, and I think that translated to me eating with my right hand so on and so forth," he said. "But for the most part, I think I'm left-handed."

Though things might come easier for elite athletes, Christman said anyone can learn to do things with their non-dominant hand.

"I think practice can overcome any innate handedness difference just about," he said. □

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